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**On the cover:** *Shopping center, Park City, PA*  
(Photo by Larry Lefever)



# RuralAmerica

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With this issue, *Rural Development Perspectives* becomes *Rural America*. Neither the contents nor the volume numbers are changing, but our new look should be easier to read and will allow for a more imaginative use of graphics.

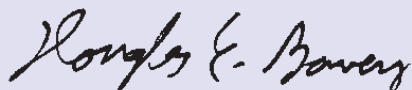
This issue begins with an article on rural consumer markets by Paul D. Frenzen and Timothy S. Parker. Most rural consumers live in markets served by a wide variety of businesses, even though rural markets have fewer people and lower per capita incomes than urban markets. However, a significant minority live in markets with a smaller range of goods and services. These areas are less likely to attract new residents, which puts them at risk for population decline and even less choice of goods in the future. Growing catalog and Internet sales and the development of large regional malls have helped alleviate the problem.

Encouraging manufacturing in rural areas has been a theme in American history since the early republic, but only since World War II has it been actively pursued as a rural development tool. Dennis Roth's article examines the literature and history of rural manufacturing and finds that theories have had to continually adjust as the realities of manufacturing have changed. Once thought to be viable only for natural resource-based industries and low-skilled, routinized work, rural areas more recently have come to be seen as feasible locations for high-technology and other higher wage industries. After falling off in the early 1980's, manufacturing employment has been rising in rural areas since 1993.

Government programs have substantially affected rural areas. Samuel D. Calhoun, Richard J. Reeder, and Faqir S. Bagi look at the distribution of Federal funds in that group of historically Black southern counties known as the Black Belt. The Black Belt has long had higher than average levels of poverty. On the whole, Black Belt counties receive more Federal funds per capita than most counties, but this is due mainly to money received by metro counties in the region. In nonmetro Black Belt counties, there is often a mismatch between the type of funding received and the county's needs. In many persistent-poverty counties, for example, relatively little goes to community resource programs, the sort of aid that might help create new jobs.

Welfare payments to families with children are being affected by recent welfare reform legislation, which has added work requirements and time limits to some important programs. Child poverty is especially severe in rural areas: 40 percent of all rural poor are children. Families with young or poorly educated parents, Black families, and single-parent households are especially likely to be poor. Carolyn C. Rogers and Elizabeth Dagata profile rural child poverty and discuss the particular problems that rural families face in coping with poverty.

A small but promising group of microenterprise programs is aimed at fostering entrepreneurship, especially among poor individuals, many of whom have been welfare recipients. As George Wallace explains, such programs have been used in a number of other countries and have recently begun to receive more attention in the United States. These programs often go beyond providing access to loans to include technical assistance and training, so that people not experienced in business can gain the skills necessary to become self-sufficient.



Douglas E. Bowers